

COUNTRYSIDE MOBILITY ON DARTMOOR



If you're inspired by The Disabled Ramblers but do not own a wheelchair or mobility scooter suitable for rougher terrain then Countryside Mobility may be able to help. Recently recognised nationally in the Visit England Awards for Excellence, it is run by the charity Living Options South West and aims to open up the South West's countryside to those with limited mobility through the hire of Trampler all terrain mobility scooters.

Trampers can go up and down slopes, over bumps and tree roots, through shallow puddles, mud and soft ground and are for use by anyone aged 14 or over who has a permanent or temporary condition that affects their ability to walk. With a top speed of four miles an hour they can keep pace with the briskest walking companion.

The scheme is for everyone who wants to enjoy the countryside but can't manage much walking. People don't have to be registered as a disabled person, or have a Blue Badge. Many people have found that the equipment has given them back their freedom, enabling them to enjoy time outdoors alone, with their partner or on a family outing.

To use the Trampers, people simply choose their site and arrange their first visit. On arrival, they join as members of Countryside Mobility which costs £10.00 per year or £2.50 for 4 weeks. Training is provided on how to use a Trampler lasting approximately 10 minutes. They are then given a membership card, which enables them to use a Trampler at any partner site without the need for further training.

Prior to a Trampler being placed at a site, an access audit is completed by Countryside Mobility staff to ensure that the site is suitable and safe for use by Trampers. Each site provides maps and route advice for Trampler users and has a breakdown/recovery system in place if a user has a problem.

Thanks to the scheme, there is now a network of accessible countryside locations across the region (including five in the Dartmoor area) that people can visit independently, knowing they will receive the same high quality experience. Physical improvements are happening at sites as a result of access audits and staff training provided through the scheme. This helps a wider range of disabled people as countryside managers, through contact with more disabled



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visitors, become more “disability aware”.

Countryside Mobility scheme member Rachael Martyn was the first person to make use of the scooter at Lydford Gorge. “Using the scooter was absolutely brilliant!” she said. “Being able to get right down to the bottom of Lydford Gorge with my family and friends is such a wonderful thing - and when you get to the bottom, what a spectacular sight the White Lady waterfall is! I find it difficult to walk and the scheme allows me really to enjoy and appreciate the natural environment, the smells, the beautiful wild flowers and the wonderful countryside. I can’t believe I would have missed out on all of this without Countryside Mobility and am so grateful for the freedom that the scheme has given me.”

Fay Langston is the National Trust’s Visitor Services Officer at Lydford Gorge. “We are really pleased to partner with Countryside Mobility and to be able to welcome more people to Lydford Gorge,” she said. “Previously, the Gorge was almost completely inaccessible to those with limited mobility due to the steep slopes but now the scooter enables people to travel right down to the bottom and back up independently and safely.”

James Maben, Project Manager for Countryside Mobility was equally enthusiastic. “We are always thrilled when any new site comes on board as a partner, or when an existing site adds another of our scooters, as more availability and more locations mean more people can enjoy the South West’s beautiful countryside,” he said. “We hope to see our site list grow and grow.” ■

Trampers can be hired at the following sites in the Dartmoor area:-

DEVON CYCLE HIRE Okehampton, Devon, EX20 4HR

Situated with direct access onto the Granite Way, part of NCR 27, near Sourton Down, offering great opportunities to explore either towards Meldon Viaduct and Okehampton or Lake Viaduct and Lydford.

Tel: 01837 861141

Email: info@devoncyclehire.co.uk
www.devoncyclehire.co.uk

NATIONAL TRUST

Buckland Abbey, Yelverton

Opportunities to explore the historic estate. Pre-booking is essential.

Tel: 01822 856045.

NATIONAL TRUST

Parke, Bovey Tracey

Situated on the Parke Estate on the south eastern edge of the National Park. There are opportunities to follow the old railway line and explore the river paths. Pre-booking is essential.

Tel: 01626 834748

Email: parke@nationaltrust.org.uk

NATIONAL TRUST

Lydford Gorge

There are two Trampler route options at Lydford Gorge. The first winds steeply downhill to the bottom of the gorge and ends at the spectacular Whitelady Waterfall. The second route follows the old railway line through dense woodland to a bird hide. Both options are out and back along the same route. For safety reasons Trampler users must be accompanied.

Tel: 01822 820320

Email: lydfordgorge@nationaltrust.org.uk

PLYMOUTH BIKE HIRE

The Bike Bus where the Trampler can be hired is located at Coypool Park and Ride (PL7 4TB) just off the A38 at the Plympton junction.

Situated on Drake’s Trail, a disused railway line and now popular cycle trail. The trail winds gently through the Plym Valley woodland across a number of historic viaducts with great views across the countryside along the western edge of Dartmoor. The Trampler can currently be used on a 6 mile section between Plymouth and the Shaugh Tunnel (near Clearbrook) but in 2015 extended use may be available. The route is well surfaced with gentle gradients.

Tel: 07577 279 928

www.plymouthbikehire.co.uk

Further Information

www.countrysidemobility.org; tel: 01392 459222

You can also find out more by following them on Twitter @CMSouthWest or Facebook CountrysideMobility.